TAKING THE TIME
Studying language effects in the translation class

PAOLA BRUSASCO
UNIVERSITY OF TURIN

Abstract – The current translation market places growing emphasis on technological tools that assist or even replace the translator in quickly producing adequate target texts. As a person involved in cultural processes that affect public discourse and society at large, both as a literary translator and as a teacher of translation, I feel that academia should not only pursue market-oriented translation skills, such as procedural knowledge of computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools and machine translation (MT), but also aim at strengthening would-be translators' processes of interpretation and making them autonomous language experts, aware of both the effects generated by language and their responsibility in using it. To support my position, I will draw on cognitive linguistics and critical discourse analysis (CDA). Adopting a constructivist approach, I will then refer to works by Kiraly (2000), Venuti (2013) and Laviosa (2014), and add some methodological proposals. Students will initially work individually and in groups, focusing on source texts, their translations and comparable texts in order to identify key language items and work toward meaning. By deploying CDA analytical tools, they will discuss the role played by individual items as well as the overall effect of both STs and TTs. New source texts will then be analysed in preparation for translation. The actual translation, effect analysis and final editing, carried out as team work, will complete a cycle aimed at 1) helping students to build knowledge through experience; 2) sensitising them to the complexity of the translation process and the paramount value of meaning-making within every single context.

Keywords: translation; cognitive linguistics; CDA; constructivism; methodological proposals.

1. Introduction

The compression of time in today's world has strongly affected the translation market, with the result that growing emphasis is placed on technological tools that assist or replace the translator in quickly producing adequate target texts. Free online services and commercial software providing instant target texts are spreading among the general public a perception of translation that Cronin (2013) terms instrumentalist and transitive – the former referring to "getting a message from point A to point B in the shortest possible period of time" (Cronin 2013, p. 4), the latter to "the subordination of every activity to a specific, pre-defined end" (ibid.). The illusion of immediacy brought about by translation software contributes to a narrowing perspective that revives the notion of translation as equivalence, downplays both the complexity of the task and the fertile research of the last few decades about its cultural and social dimensions, and – perhaps more importantly – contributes to unquestioningly spreading texts or parts of texts largely determined by market or security needs.

While huge help is provided by computer assisted translation (CAT) tools and translation software, which, together with the internet, have radically changed the way translators work and increased their speed, it cannot be denied that high numbers of automated substitutions and already-used translation solutions tend to homogenise target

texts and consolidate statistically emergent sentences and turns of phrases.[1] It seems to me that academia is the only site where, together with the acquisition of market-spendable skills, a more conscious debate can be promoted in order to enhance students' sensitivity to the effect(s) translated texts may produce once inscribed in the receiving culture. Potential translators could thus gain procedural knowledge of CAT tools, machine translation (MT) and workflows, but also develop close reading skills, gauge the effects of texts and become aware of their power to confirm or question linguistic expressions and thereby the social construct they shape. Ideally, these skills should be interiorised so as to inform both the initial stage of any translation project and its post-editing, especially in cases heavily relying on CAT or automated translation.

In order to support such a contention, I will reflect on the advantages that could be derived from introducing aspects of cognitive linguistics and critical discourse analysis in the translation class. Some methodological proposals will be outlined, based on the belief that developing contextualisation and interpretation skills is a prerequisite for translation, since – independently of the type of text and the degree of human involvement in the process – deep critical understanding of the text and its relation to the world is required both in translation and in post-editing.

2. What cognitive linguistics can contribute

The extraordinary nature of language has prompted various lines of investigation that roughly speaking can be ascribed to two main views: language as an autonomous system with intrinsic rules as postulated by structuralism, and language as "the product of a complex set of social, historical and political conditions of formation" (Thompson 1991, p. 5). A fairly recent development has been brought about by cognitive linguistics (among others, Fauconnier 1997; Croft 2004; Hudson 2008; Evand and Pourcel 2009), which – by studying the way language items and structures are acquired – hypothesises that language learning does not reside in a dedicated module, but develops thanks to the individual's general cognitive abilities. It follows that the mental processes through which a word is at the same time analysed and inscribed into an existing net are strongly influenced by personal experience with that word, by the peculiarities of the context of use and the people involved in it.

> The language structures that we store in our minds are based on our experiences with language, so they may well include details of the situation such as the kind of person who uses them. […] because any word is primarily an action – a general across a range of utterances – rather than marks on a page, it inherits an actor from the general "action" category; and of course the "actor" of a word is its speaker. (Hudson 2008, p. 102)

By including actions and actors, cognitive linguistics emphasises the social dimension in language acquisition and retrieval. Croft (2009) even postulates an extension that he labels "social cognitive linguistics", advocating a growing integration of pragmatics and sociolinguistics into cognitive linguistics on the assumption that "grammatical structures

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[1] While the debate on translation universals is open (Baker 1993; Mauranen and Kujamäki 2004; Malmkjær and Windle 2011), translation memories and, even more so, statistical machine translation rely by their own nature on the principle of recycling language, which leads to higher frequencies of the same items or segments.

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and processes in the mind are instances of general *social* cognitive abilities" (Croft 2009, p. 398, emphasis mine).

Human language is acquired and used through the joint action of long term memory and working memory, whereby the brain constantly draws on its repertoire of lexis and structures and is updated with new entries. This is part of the constructivist learning process constantly going on in our minds, mainly unconsciously in L1, more deliberately so in L2. Investigations into the processes of storage and retrieval have yielded remarkable insight into the nets created in the brain and the various types of activation that are triggered when a word (stimulus) enters our perception. However personal these mechanisms may be – depending on the range of world experience an individual has – recurrences have been observed, among which the existence of prototypes and the "goodness-of-fit" principle. Interesting insights have come from prototype theory, which developed following an experiment carried out by Rosch (1975).[2] As the results of her tests showed general agreement on which items were considered the most representative of each category, Rosch initially concluded that categorisation happens on the basis of an abstract mental representation, i.e., a prototype, and that an item is assigned to a certain category on the basis of how well it fits, i.e. how many of the key characteristics it shares with the prototype. However, the notion of mental prototypes was problematic and later studies (e.g. Schwanenflugel and Rey 1986), showed that speakers of different languages often indicate different exemplars,[3] which highlights the influence of culture on the perception of what is prototypical. This is a crucial element for students to be aware of when working at interlingual translation, as items considered equivalent may activate different associations in the source and target cultures.

Translation is one of the main activities of the brain, which receives and translates stimuli into electrochemical signals and decodes inputs of various kinds, conveying messages into constantly and immediately context-adjusted codes. In the practice of interlingual translation, these processes are largely responsible for the variety of target texts produced out of one source text by any number of people or even by the same person at different times. We could say that an abstract core meaning is identified, but its concrete manifestation takes different forms depending on the variables outlined before. On the contrary, resorting to translation memories and MT is a guarantee of uniformity and consistency – which can be desirable in certain areas such as technical discourse and, less systematically so, in politics, finance, medicine and others where terminology must be harmonized – because access to ready-made, previously used solutions replaces the personal, context-dependent trajectory towards meaning-making. In this case, translation solutions tend to repeat themselves, whether statistically retrieved by searching huge repositories or formulated according to the software's lexicon and rules. Both of these procedures aim at optimising translation outputs in economic and corporate-strategic terms, promoting the use of controlled languages.

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[2] Rosch involved over 200 participants who were given a series of category names (bird, vegetable, clothing, etc.) and lists of about fifty examples of each, to be rated from 1 to 7 as the most representative of each category.

[3] The majority of the subjects Rosch tested in California identified the robin as the prototypical bird, while in the study conducted by Schwanenflugel and Rey in Florida on English-speaking monolinguals and Spanish-speaking monolinguals the prototypes turned out to be the eagle and the canary respectively. This suggests that the mental images we form do not depend on language only, nor on a homogeneous overlap of language and culture, but rather on a more localized version of the latter. In this case one may wonder whether the prevalence of the eagle, the symbol of the USA, has anything to do with the unconscious need to reaffirm one's identity in the light of Florida's growing immigrant communities.

> The use of versions of a controlled natural language (CNL) is held to be one way of avoiding the expensive and dangerous chaos of novelty. CNLs in English generally use specific sets of grammatical and style rules, a restricted vocabulary, limited sentence length, determiners, and the active rather than the passive voice to generate content. This makes texts easier to translate but it also means that more translations can be reused as the likelihood of 'accidental content' being generated in the source language is diminished. The less that is being said, the more often it can be said (in other languages), at no extra cost. (Cronin 2013, p. 37)

Besides pre-editing strategies – correcting mistakes, eliminating ambiguities, simplifying structures and, in the case of statistical machine translation, adapting the input text so as to facilitate the match with the machine training data – Cronin (2013) also considers corporate English as subject to a streamlining policy in the name of greater understandability that may result in a simplified version of global English. However, if we accept Harder's contention that "words can usefully be understood as designed to prod, or prompt, the addressee to carry out interpretive activities of specifiable kinds" (Harder 2009, p. 15), it seems imperative that translation solutions be adopted as a result of an equally dynamic interpretive activity. Harder reflects on the structure of a language event (input – processing – output):

> The idea is that in order to choose a specific language item competently, one must know what 'input content' it can add to the message. In order to actually succeed in making a contribution, it has to be processed by the addressee, resulting in an understanding that constitutes the 'output'. (Harder 2009, p. 16)

This process of selection is replicated in the mediated form of text production that is translation. The translator is first a recipient, interpreting the input received, then a new sender, able in turn to predict the target text addressee's interpretive needs. While the source text author looks at his/her recipient, the translator constantly looks back and forward, to the source text – pursuing a (varying) degree of adherence to content and style – and to the target text, trying to anticipate its recipient's background knowledge and interpretive needs in the light of its intended function. Thus, the translator's choices result from the interplay of these two variables and must be based on an even greater awareness than those of the first author as the mediation process adds – controllable yet inescapable – elements of personal ideology and idiolect as well as a new overall weight which the target text will acquire once it is inscribed in the receiving culture. The contribution brought by a competent, ethically and critically conscious translator derives from a selection process that relies on the ability to experience the text as a whole, a quality that can be jeopardised by automated substitutions. The segmentation of texts (usually into sentences) which is the operative principle of translation memories neglects the *Gestalt* quality of a text and the meaning it acquires following the intersection between the peculiarities of a certain situation as decoded by a certain language user.[4] Generally speaking, the use of translation memories and CAT tools helps at the level of coded meaning, while utterance meaning requires greater elaboration.

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[4] By *Gestalt* I am not only referring to textual cohesion, coherence and meaning, but also to intertextual, intermodal and intercultural reverberations that may be triggered once the text enters a certain culture.

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3. What CDA can contribute

Critical Discourse Analysis studies the ways in which language can be used to influence people's minds and focuses on social problems which are seen as largely resulting from unequal power relations represented in and constituted through discourse. CDA assumes that discourse is historically grounded and constitutes society and culture, while at the same time being constituted by them; it also assumes the inevitable role of ideology, which can be revealed through an interpretative socio-linguistic analysis of text and context. Critical discourse analysts refute the idea of 'neutral' knowledge and are aware of their sociopolitical situatedness in culture and society. They are not only interested in describing the properties of discourse, but also in finding explanations for their use and effectiveness. Van Dijk (1988, 2001) emphasises the connection between cognitive processes and social features:

> Whereas some elementary processes and constraints may be general properties of human information processing (e.g., memory limitations), and although our biographically-rooted unique understandings may be represented in the personal models of our experiences, these processes and representations are thoroughly dependent on social information processing and interaction. Knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, knowledge of the language, and all other shared information are acquired, used, and changed in social contexts. […] In other words, memory and cognition are as much social as they are mental phenomena. (van Dijk 1988, p. 25)

Van Dijk too resorts to the notion of prototype, which in this case takes on a social value of group belonging and includes prototypical appearance, activities and social manifestations. Hence, our perception, categorization and interpretations are the product of a constant interplay of the personal and the collective. These two dimensions operate on both a micro- and a macrolevel: for example, a racist speech in parliament is "a discourse at the microlevel of social interaction in the specific situation of a debate, but at the same time [it] may enact or be a constituent part of legislation or the reproduction of racism at the macrolevel" (van Dijk, 2001, p. 354). CDA has not developed a standard approach to texts as scholars have adopted different strategies and specialised in different areas of discourse; however, since they all posit language as a means of social control, some key aspects are shared and highlighted in analysis. First, the acknowledgement that context – as it encompasses a broad frame made of situation, setting, actions and participants with both their mental characterisations and their social roles – determines the production and/or comprehension of discourse; therefore, control over context or one or more of its components is extremely influential because it can define a communicative situation, choose who may be involved in it and define the objectives of discourse. Second, the awareness that those in control can decide the type of discourse structure to be adopted, i.e., what genres or speech acts are to be used in a certain situation and, in turn, details of meaning, form and style. Drawing on Halliday's systemic-functional grammar, CDA frequently resorts to transitivity analysis which focuses on syntax in order to see how actors are represented in terms of agency, responsibility and point of view. For example, the use of relational processes (through the verbs *be* and *have*) may lead to opinions or judgements being presented as facts, while nominalisations and the use of passive constructions can delete responsibility and agency. Such elements are crucial in translation and informed decisions must be made lest haste, the pursuit of naturalness in the target language, or insufficiently post-edited machine versions produce different effects from what was originally meant or needed. The emergence of a controlled language as pointed out by Cronin (2013) is inevitably related to issues of power as only by using the appropriate consolidated formula will people and companies be able to participate in

globalised business, have access to services or avoid arousing suspicion in security agencies.

4. Meaning-making in translation

Traditionally, translation has been defined as the transfer of a message from one language into another, thus emphasising the carrying of a certain content across a linguistic and cultural divide. After an age-long debate on literal versus free translation, the second half of the 20th century has been characterised by a growing awareness of the composite nature of translation and a shift of focus from its linguistic basis to textual, cultural and social dimensions. Nevertheless, as Venuti (2013) points out, much of the research and teaching –independently of the specific dimension it is based on – starts from the assumption that the source text contains an invariant, an objective essence which can and must be identified and preserved whenever and wherever the text is translated. Meaning would thus be seen as inherent in the text, stable and capable of being transported to different receivers without changing. This view of translation is defined as instrumental because it "does not take into account the transformative difference that translation inscribes in the source text" (Venuti 2013, p. 13). What is being argued for is the recognition of the desirability – and inevitability – of the hermeneutic motion the translator performs and, I would add, the need for translators to be equipped with critical tools and knowledge to bolster such interpretive act. If we envisage the meaning of a text as non-given, the product of ever-varying combinations in situated interactions with speakers/writers/readers and hence liable to be constructed differently depending on the person and the situation, then the same is true of translation, whose final output is determined, to a relevant degree, by the interpretation of the source text by the translator, that of the target text by its recipient and the way in which the new text inscribes itself in the receiving culture.

An unstable view of meaning and hence of translation is discussed by Cronin (2006) in relation to universalism, immutable mobiles and mutable mobiles. The element that lends credibility to universal truths and scientific facts is the "where-question" (Law and Mol, quoted in Cronin 2006, p. 26), i.e. the replication at the point of destination of the original conditions and outcomes, which leads to the definition of "immutable mobiles", able to travel through space and time retaining all their characteristics. By contrast, "mutable mobiles" are characterised by a dynamic interaction between the truth, fact or object and the space they are transferred to: some aspects are preserved, others are adapted, but never the same and never in the same proportion, which would instead imply a frozen essence. Cronin exemplifies the latter through the Zimbabwe bush pump, whose "set-up varies from one village to the next" (2006, p. 27), but remains recognizable and carries out the same function. It is easy to see how this negotiation between sameness and diversity can apply to translation too and be likened to Tymoczko's metonymic paradigm according to which only certain elements and aspects of a text are prioritised and preserved by translators, thus yielding "a form of representation in which parts or aspects of the source text come to stand for the whole" (Cronin 2006, p. 28).

It is therefore hardly possible to fix meaning, even by resorting to atomistic techniques like componential analysis, which, by identifying pairs of semantic oppositions aims at revealing a core of defining traits, precisely because such an approach ignores the social space and the conditions of use. In a way, meaning is construed at the level of the single contextualised token rather than by recourse to its stored, and possibly shared, type. The linguistic input triggers memorised associations that are activated in human beings

through similar paths but eventually depend on the data available to the individual. Also, the recipient of a message is normally able to identify a content (*what*) and, less consciously, a series of aspects determining *how* the message is conveyed which complete its interpretation. Consciousness is called into action when the message violates the conventions or expectations usually associated to the situational context, so that the recipient is prompted to focus on the deviation which is likely to provide a key to a deeper interpretation.

5. The translation class: methodological proposals

I am drawing on such diverse areas as I would like to look at the translator as a socially characterised actor and at translation as a particular experience of and with language that brings together aspects of language learning, competence and performance, but also issues of representation and power. The translation class, then, should not just aim at the transmission of tested strategies and procedural knowledge; rather, it should be an interactive, multifaceted environment providing opportunities to reflect on the complexity of the process, experiment with reading and writing, and become aware of the potential effects of translated texts. Bearing in mind constructivist theories and the evolution of the workplace, whereby translators often work in teams on large projects, it makes sense to set up the translation class in a composite way which includes both traditional lesson and occasions for plenary discussion, but also devotes time and space to both personal reflection and group work.

Up to about twenty years ago, a comment frequently heard in translation agencies, translation schools and publishing houses was "literary translators can translate anything", thus including non-literary, even technical texts, if necessary. The situation has changed: the multilingual needs brought about by the globalised market and the technological developments that allow translators to increase speed and consistency by retrieving already-used solutions (their own, commercial or institutional) require new skills. However, at the risk of sounding obvious, there is an aspect of literary translation that deserves being enhanced, i.e., the attention devoted to form as co-constitutive of content and the kind of problem-solving carried out in texts whose length and stratification put a premium on cohesion and coherence. Moreover, translators of literary texts often carry out extensive research to deal with culture-specific terms and practices or with the peculiarities of specialised languages that authors at times include to better portray certain fields of knowledge or activity. Because most texts are likely to have consequences in real life – for example by setting up partnerships, providing or denying rights, informing (and influencing) the public and so on – translators should be able to critically deconstruct the source text and cognizant enough to anticipate the target text's scope and impact. Therefore, my point here is to advocate greater attention to fostering thinking and problematising the operation of retrieval and substitution carried out with the help of various software. Looking for example at the website of what is possibly the leading company in this sector[5], which produces software for free-lance translators, governments

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[5] SDL (http://www.sdl.com/cxc/language/translation-productivity/trados-studio/). The current corporation derives from a number of acquisitions over the last ten years which added to the original UK-based company others specialised in translation productivity tools, translation management solutions, statistical machine translation and social media monitoring capabilities. The information reported here is taken from the SDL Trados website and downloadable material.

and corporations, one finds that the company also provides social media monitoring capabilities and automated translation for defence and intelligence purposes. Interestingly, types of 'handling' are determined on the basis of content, which implicitly pushes to the side what may be termed the surface characteristics of a text, i.e., its style and genre. Thus, intercepted data, SMS, user forums, alerts/notifications, emails, social media, Wikis, blogs, voice-to-text and IM are processed through fully automated translation; websites, knowledge bases, technical documentation, manuals, FAQ, user guides, help, product descriptions undergo human-assisted automated translation, while analyses/reports, contracts, newsletters and HR documents are assigned to human translation. At first sight, repetitiveness as against unpredictability would seem to be the discerning principle. However, that does not fully apply as each group contains categories that contradict this principle. Therefore, the distribution must be guided by quantity. And, even if on the company's graph the last group of texts is placed higher on the axis of quality, the question arises whether user guides or knowledge bases or social media deserve a lower quality than newsletters. It would then seem that the ranking has to do with how binding for the company each type of text is or what market/legal consequences it may produce. Without entering a debate about the desirability and the need to translate so much data, including personal information, the emphasis on speed and size (from 2,000 to 100,000 words per minute) and the reduced space for human processing make translation-oriented analysis almost irrelevant. In fact, in the area of monitoring and intelligence, analysis is carried out at the end of the process, after data has been translated into one or more target languages. However, it seems to me that relying on automated translation to provide versions of potentially sensitive material to be analysed afterwards is not risk-free, as the sum total of assembled segments – however precise each of them may be – might be different from the *Gestalt* of the source text or, in a more banal instance, the updates of a translation memory may not keep up with the speed and scope of language change in, say, social media.

The speed factor informing similar corporate policies also conditions the work of translators in more traditional environments, not just in terms of closer deadlines but also of the fast pace of change in all sectors. In preparation for this, it is necessary, as Kiraly (2000) states, to shift the teaching mode from transmission to transformation and focus on a process of learning that empowers students. This view is in line with a large body of constructivist theories which posit the learner as actively involved in interpreting experience in order to form his/her own structures of knowledge, which will be modified by new experience. The ability to adapt, research and take responsibility is crucial in translation, which, according to Kiraly, is one of the best examples of "ill-structured knowledge domain", i.e., a domain that relies on various conceptual structures applied at the same time and has to cope with remarkable variation even when texts or tasks belong to the same type.

It seems to me that the technical procedures necessary to complete a translation project can be best acquired in a real situation, with, for example, translation software that is customised for a specific aim and client. However, in the class, a series of steps might be taken in order to involve the students directly in the process of discovering current evolutions. For example, students could

1. surf the internet looking for translation software/providers, especially those meant for professional use;

2. be divided into groups, each focusing on one translation software/provider: read its presentation and the rationale for its development, watch its demo(s) and download trial versions;

3. reflect on benefits and shortcomings for all the actors involved – translator, client, recipient – which will then be discussed in plenary session.

As will be clear, this sequence aims at shifting the core activity from the instructor to the students, so that they can use skills they are familiar with (internet search) in combination with an area of knowledge that they are building through their own findings and experience. Also, the different work modes (individual, group, group plus plenary) are meant to make the lesson more dynamic and provide opportunities for both personal reflection and debate. After this preparatory research, the translator's activity could be discussed with reference to the notion of multilingual subject, whose symbolic self is "less intent on decoding than on interpreting words and their indexicalities", (Kramsch 2009, in Laviosa 2014, p. 65). While helping students become more aware of the interpretation processes they carry out, a translation class thus conceived also highlights the connections they perceive in source texts and those they choose to radiate from target texts. This focus on the power and agency of the translator echoes Laviosa's reflection on the multilingual subject:

> […] becoming a multilingual subject means exercising a symbolic power that derives not only from the ability to master the language of the Other, but also, and more importantly, from the capacity to expand one's own symbolic self. This entails understanding what others and we ourselves remember from the past, imagine and project onto the future as well as being aware of our own and others' subject positioning in the present. (Laviosa 2014, p. 65)

It is the time relation – past, present and future – that resonates with the previously advocated need for analysis, highlighting an informedly imaginative projection of the Other, independently of their being at the source or the target end of the translation process. Such a projection requires a preemptive gauging of the value and the consequences of the target text. The weight of words and their combinations needs to be discussed with students in the light of the advertised handiness and immediacy of translation software, especially because one of the problems often met with in the translation class is a widespread inability to see and manage the relationship between details, overall text and the world. To use another concept put forward by Kramsch (2009), many students seem to be lacking 'symbolic competence', which "nurtures a critical, self-reflexive mentality that affords us the possibility of transforming ourselves as well as questioning and challenging established meanings and social conventions" (Laviosa 2014, p. 67). The ability to notice and interpret form, style, register, genre, lexis, syntax, inter- and extratextual context – which characterises the competent multilingual subject – should be a key prerequisite for the translation class, where a closer reading habit can be developed together with greater awareness of one's power to question narratives. Since this prerequisite is often lacking, it is one of the first tasks to focus on. To this end, before engaging in translation tasks proper, it would be useful to devise some analysis-conducive activities, such as:[6]

1. Focus on ST: identifying the main function(s), the main semantic fields, verb forms (active/passive voice; material/mental/behavioural/verbal/relational/existential

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[6] This stage, whose slowness is meant to give students time to experience both the procedure and the language details, can be best carried out by using comparable and parallel corpora, both mono- and bilingual.

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processes), actors (functionalisation/identification), register, cohesive devices (especially conjunctions, as they provide orientation), required background knowledge, culture-specific references. Apart from preparing a sort of skeleton of the text which will be useful when translating, these items will help to position the sender and identify agency, evaluative language and ideological perspective.

2. Focus on SL: reading comparable texts in the source language, selected on the basis of content, function, text type and length, and assessing whether the text to be translated shares the same features and is therefore consistent with a certain type of discourse, or where and to what extent it departs from it. This will reinforce the interpretation of the text to be translated and provide information about the topic which will assist comprehension, especially when dealing with specialised discourse.

3. Focus on TL: reading comparable texts originally written in the target language and carry out the same type of analysis described in point 1. The aim is to strengthen analytical skills and become familiar with the conventions and the specialised lexicon used in the TL.

4. Focus on TL: analysing a series of parallel texts selected as in point 2 and discussing them with reference to the findings of points 1-3. Assuming that the intended purposes of the translated texts are the same as those of the source texts, students can first consider broader aspects such as text type conventions, function and register, then they can focus on recurrent items, both specialised terminology or turns of phrase and items belonging to general language.

5. Focus on dictionaries: a kind of wild-card activity, most suitable as a corollary to points 1, 3 or 7, this entails getting students to gather as much information as possible about those terms identified as key; to do so, students will compare dictionary entries (both online and traditional, mono- and bilingual, general and specialised) in order to deepen their understanding of each term and promote attention to denotation, connotation, register, geographical variation and the lexical relations words entertain with other words. In this way students will be better equipped to evaluate lexical choices as their spectrum will be clearly defined, and to consider the effect of possible alternatives.

6. Focus on digital tools: using the software found online, students enter segments of text to be translated and compare the versions thus obtained with their expectations. They will then analyse them in terms of linguistic and contextual adequacy and effect.

7. Translation: the text is translated. The translation could be carried out individually and then checked within small groups so as to produce one group version, or students could work in pairs or small groups from the very beginning, debating their choices and formulating one final group version. The resulting translated texts (one per group) will then be compared and adjusted until one final version is agreed upon. Alternatively, the text could be divided into sections and given to individuals or small groups, who will then get together to harmonise the various parts; or, drawing on *skopos* theory, the same source text could be assigned to various groups with different indications of purpose or ideological slant, so as to compare the final effect of each.

8. Analysis: the translated version(s) are compared and submitted to the same kind of analysis carried out on previous texts.

9. Editing/post-editing: the first term usually refers to the revision of human translated texts, the second to the (usually) heavier intervention to improve machine-generated translations. In order to experiment with the different requests a translator may receive, students could carry out light post-editing, i.e., the minimum intervention to

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make the machine output understandable, or full post-editing, which aims at making it adequate on all levels.

Some of these activities could be structured so as to create a workflow, with groups of students in charge of different steps. Following the whole sequence is time-consuming and it is not necessary to go through it with every translation task carried out, since variation is also important to maintain a high level of interest in learners. However, especially at the beginning, it is useful to provide students with a wide range of activities converging toward the same objective, i.e., adequate and carefully thought-out translations. Later, it will be possible to highlight those steps that most meet the students' needs.

6. Conclusion

Society has been greatly affected by the advent of the digital, and translation has come to occupy a key position in the growing volume of exchanges all over the world. Translation technologies continue to progress and undoubtedly provide an essential engine without which institutional and economic actors could not interact the way they do. As Cronin (2013) points out, the pervasiveness of digital translation often generates opposed views – a kind of nostalgic looking back to the good old days of craftsmanship, and an enthusiastic praise of the endless possibilities it opens, including that of a world where communication flows unimpeded. The phenomenon is further complicated by changing patterns of reading and literacy in general, which are informed by the move from the printed page to the word on screen and by an emphasis on an immediacy mainly dictated by the global market that has altered not only economy and politics but also language and cultural models.

> […] the potential instantaneity and accessibility of digital media imply a greater acceleration of translation flows with potentially subversive effects, but equally the widespread dissemination of translations that strongly domesticate images of other polities and cultures to the dominant political, economic, and cultural agendas. (Cronin 2013, p. 8)

It seems to me that the humanities have the task to at least raise questions and invite reflections which may avoid an acritical acceptance of technological developments that – helpful as they may be – are undoubtedly playing a role in shaping the contemporary world and its relations of power. Global translation providers, or smaller ones using software developed by global corporations, are likely to cater for the localisation of webpages in areas with 'minority' languages and/or scarcer access to IT, thus imbibing local cultures with 'universalising' linguistic and cultural models. Without any pretence to stop such a movement, my position is that of retaining a greater space for humanism even in the practice of digital translation. This is why the translation class should include time dedicated to both deep reading and reflective evaluation of the choice of words and their effect. The centrality of students is based on the belief that individuals should be responsible for the construction of their learning and be guided towards developing an ability and a habit of critical reading and interpretation. The teacher is envisaged as an initiator and an expert who can scaffold the students' hypotheses and efforts towards understanding and consolidating learning. The methodological proposals outlined deliberately challenge the imperative of processes geared to increase speed (hence quantity and ultimately profit), in the belief that critical interpretation is the necessary prerequisite for any kind of work on texts. They find their rationale in cognitive linguistics and borrow CDA's analytical tools. Besides being preparatory for translation, the various steps devoted

to reading, interpreting, assessing and discussing are ways to focus on the importance of detail as against getting the gist of a language experience, and underline that form *is* meaning. The process of discovery implied in decoding texts and revealing their mechanisms works on an instructional level as a journey towards acquiring awareness of the power of words and creating the basis for carefully thought-out translations (or post-editing), and on a more personal level as an experience in reflective and collaborative work hopefully promoting ethics and professionally informed choices.

Taking the time. Studying language effects in the translation class

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